6: Densmore E-5 (1920)1929 NU28 Papago NU28

PAPAGO MUSIC

By Frances Densmore

THE PAPAGO TRIBE [1]

The name of this tribe is derived from *papâh*, meaning "beans," and *ôotam*, meaning "people." They are a Piman tribe, closely allied to the Pima, and their original home was the territory in the main and tributary valleys of the Santa Cruz River and in the territory south and southeast of the Gila River, especially south of Tucson, Ariz., and extending across the desert into Sonora, Mexico. They are an agricultural people, maïze, beans, and cotton formerly being their principal crops, which they cultivated by irrigation. Many desert plants contributed to their food supply, especially the mesquite, the beans of which are eaten, and the saguaro or giant cactus (*Cereus giganteus*), from the fruit of which a ceremonial drink was formerly made. An extensive trade in salt was formerly conducted by the Papago, who obtained the salt from the great inland lagoons and sold it in Tucson and Tubac. At present their principal crops are wheat and barley, and they raise cattle to a considerable extent. They are by nature an industrious people and are now finding employment in various activities incidental to the coming of the white race. For instance, many are able to make a living by cutting mesquite wood on the desert and selling it in the neighboring towns. The skin of the Papago is reddish brown and they are gentle in their nature. Like the Pima, the Papago women are expert basket makers but their baskets are much coarser than those of the Pima. Their pottery is far inferior to that of the Pueblos, and the designs and patterns of both the baskets and the pottery are the same as those of the Pima. They were not lacking in bravery in old times, as shown by their expeditions against the Apache, from whose raids they suffered severely. Their typical dwelling was dome-shaped, consisting of a framework of saplings thatched with grass or leafy shrubs, with an adjacent shelter or ramada. At the present time they live chiefly in adobe houses. There are six subdivisions of the tribe living within the United States. The number of Papago in the United States as shown in the census last preceding this work was 4,465. There was no family of mixed blood (Papago and white) living on the reserva-

[1] See Handbook of American Indians, Bull. 30, part 2, Bur. Amer. Ethn., p. 206, from which this description of the tribe is quoted.

6: Densmore E-5 (1920) 1929NU28 Papago NU28

tion and it was the opinion that there was no mixture with Mexican or Spanish. The Government maintained four day schools on the reservation.

The study of Papago music was begun at San Xavier, near Tucson, Ariz., in February, 1920. The Papago village is near San Xavier Mission, which was established in 1692. At this mission the Franciscan Fathers minister to the Indians, who number about 700 in this locality. The Government agency was located here in 1915, but was moved two years later to Indian Oasis, now known as Sells, Ariz. The Papago at San Xavier live in adobe houses and still grind their own corn, but are adopting a general use of food supplies purchased in Tucson. (Pl. 2.) The country around San Xavier is desert with mesquite and cactus. There are rugged hills and deep gorges cut by rivers that are raging floods at some seasons and "dry runs" at other seasons. The principal varieties of cactus are the saguaro or giant cactus, and the cholla. (Pl. 3.)

On a hillside near San Xavier is an old burial place. (Pl. 4, *a*.) The burial spaces are formed by building a low stone parapet on the side of the hill and roofing it with heavy timbers thrust into the hillside. The bodies were placed in these spaces, or shelters, and all openings were closed with stones. After a suitable time the bodies were taken out and others were placed in the inclosure. There were compartments in these burial chambers and several bodies were placed in each compartment. They have not been used in recent times and some remain tightly closed, while in others it is possible to see parts of skeletons and fragments of various sorts. Plate 4, *b*, *c*, shows the same opening, one being at a distance and the other showing the interior, where a skull can be seen. Near it was a bone that appeared to be part of a leg or arm. Scattered about were bits of leather resembling parts of a saddle. This place is particularly sightly. It faces the south, with a magnificent sweep of view. The mountains in Mexico can be seen at a distance of about 40 miles, while in the foreground is an expanse of desert. The old and new are strangely mingled here, as it is in this desert that the Government is establishing (1921) an irrigation system by means of which the Indians will be able to irrigate their land.

A further study of Papago music was made in November and December, 1920, at Sells, more than 60 miles west of Tucson. Songs were also recorded at Vomari village, and information was obtained at Santa Rosa, the former being in the extreme southern and the latter in the extreme northern part of the reservation. The customs and songs differ somewhat in different localities, and numerous photographs were taken showing the geography of the country. Between Sells and Vomari the country is more mountainous than in the vicinity of San Xavier, the most prominent mountain being Baboquivari

18: Kelly E-4, 5 (no date) 1963 NU28 Papago NU28

Chapter I

HISTORY

The modern Papago, and their effort to adjust to the American industrial civilization around them, cannot be understood apart from the traditions and values that have come down through the years from the ancestral Papago society which occupied this same region in pre-Spanish times. The contrast between the Papago society and economy of 1700 and modern American industrial life is as great as the contrast between any two societies in the world today.

Linguistically, the Papago dialects--still spoken in the vast majority of Papago homes--are classified with the Pima-Papago division of the Piman language which, in turn, is grouped with the larger Uto-Aztecan stock which is made up of Indian languages spoken from southern Mexico to the borders of Montana and Wyoming. Culturally, the Papago are related to the desert tribes of northwestern Mexico, western Arizona, southern California and Nevada.

As a group these so-called "Rancheria" cultures are characterized as having loose political organization with little authority vested in the chief or headman;

105 lack of interest in wealth, religious structures, and
171 public works; relative unimportance of religious cere-
175 monialism and the weak development of religious leader-
ship. On the positive side, they had a highly developed
[181] native literature in myth and song recital, in folk
stories, and in formalized oratory; they were greatly
interested in social gatherings and were especially
sensitive to the maintenance of form and custom in social
intercourse. The reports on all these people give the
impression of an unhurried, relaxed type of life, and a
dependence upon established tradition and the old people
who understood this tradition, rather than upon individual
initiative.

171 The absence of individual aggressiveness, the
181 ease of manner, and the lack of a fully developed interest
178 in economic advancement, as this is known in white society,
persist as cultural traits among the modern groups and
account, in some measure, for their resistance to measures
and proposals stemming from the white man's concept of
"progress," and his interest in wealth as a symbol of
status and achievement.

175 The Papago, however, with their interest in
171 agriculture and in village life, had a somewhat more com-
105 plex way of life than the typical "Rancheria" groups of
northwestern Arizona, southeastern California, and Nevada,
[621] in pre-Spanish days. The Papago village, in fact, was
usually politically autonomous and served as the next most

important social unit to the extended family which, in some other Rancheria cultures, was the largest effective social unit. Leadership, as among other desert tribes, was more through personal influence and character than vested authority. In addition to the headman each village also had a council of elders, a village crier, a keeper of the smoke, and other village officers who were in charge of ceremonies and festivals. Papago warfare, led by men selected for their ability, was directed principally against the Apache on the east.

Perhaps the people now known as Papagos would be more accurately described as the descendents of three west to east groups whose "Rancheria" type culture became more complex toward the east where increased rainfall and surface water permitted such things as concentrated and permanent settlements, greater division of labor, and more elaborate religious ceremonies. Dr. Bernard Fontana, at any rate, has pointed out that at the time of Spanish contact there were three major "types" of Papago groups classified on the basis of subsistence and settlement patterns. (Personal Communication). These, according to Fontana, were the western centrally-based nomads, the Sand Papagos, living in an area of less than five inches of rainfall annually and located between the Gila Mountains on the west to the Ajo Mountains on the east; the central "akchin" farmers, or Papagos proper, whose winter-summer transhumance

175 pattern is well known, living in an area of between five
101 and ten inches of rainfall annually and located between
131 the Ajo Mountains on the west and the Baboquivari Mountains
132 on the east; and the eastern riverine sedentary Papagos, or "Sobaipuris", living in an area of between ten and fifteen inches of rainfall annually and located between the Baboquivari Mountains on the west and the San Pedro Valley on the east.

175 Papago agricultural techniques were simple.
105 Most fields were small, located at the foot of steep
241 slopes, where intermittent streams emerged at the edge of the flat desert land; at these "mouths" (akchin in Papago), a small cultivated area could be watered, if rain came in the adjacent hills at the right time. Small irrigation channels were used to bring water from larger mountain streams to fields in the flat valleys, but no large-scale development of irrigation was possible such as the Gila
[162] and Salt valleys permitted. Along the Santa Cruz River, however, in the vicinity of the San Xavier Mission south of Tucson, extensive irrigation canals were used in pre-Spanish times and, even though smaller in extent than the aboriginal irrigation systems along the Gila and Salt, permitted a concentration of population at Bac which exceeded the size of any of the Pima villages farther north. (Dr. Bernard Fontana, Personal Communication).

The principal aboriginal crops were corn, beans, and squash, to which the Spanish missionaries added wheat, kidney beans, lentils, vetch, chick peas, and possibly watermelons. These new crops, however, were not grown in significant quantities until the last few generations. Wheat could be planted in February and harvested in May, and corn was regularly planted in July or August when the summer rains came; thus two grain crops a year became possible, greatly increasing the agricultural potential of the area, although it was still limited by the extreme variation and scarcity of rainfall.

175 105 241 [177] [221]

The typical family was made up of the parents, their children, and the wives and children of the sons. Such units were grouped into villages with a tendency for village members to be related through the paternal line. Like other southern and western Arizona groups, the family was the important economic unit, with each family responsible for its own subsistence.

175 105 596 [621]

Religious practices were centered around the recurring events of the annual economic cycle interspersed by many curing and other personal crisis ceremonies. The regular annual round of ceremonies included as its most important events a rain ceremony in early summer, after the gathering of the fruit of the giant cactus, at which the fermented juice of the fruit was drunk, and a deer dance in the autumn or early winter when the people had moved into their mountain localities from the summer field villages.

175 105 796 [771] [221] [361]

175 their mountain localities from the summer field villages.
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796 The most important and elaborate of all religious ceremonies, however, was the viikita which was celebrated every four years. This has been called a harvest ceremony but it was more than that and might better be called a "world renewal ceremony", something designed to set everything in order and to promote general future growth and welfare (Dr. Bernard Fontana, Personal Communication).

175 The picture is one of a society of small autono-
105 mous villages, loosely held together by custom and tradition, and governed by the unanimous decisions of the older men. For the individual there was a high degree of freedom coupled with full responsibility for the protection, livelihood, and well being of the members of his own family.

181 The difference between this type of society and
197 our own is difficult to visualize. The typical Papago feels most intensively both the loss of individual action in our highly institutionalized society, and the loss of almost complete self-dependence. The welfare agency, for example, will feed his children if they are hungry, but he must abide by their rules; the Indian Service school educates his children, but he has no real control over what they are taught, or how they are taught. It is the difference between a society with small resources, and small opportunities, but with maximum individual freedom and responsibility, and a society with great resources and opportunities made possible by the transfer of individual action to group action and controls